

Helpful Hints for the Novice Exhibitor

By Kitty Belendez

Exhibiting at a rose show for the very first time can be formidable. Been there, done that! I plunged blindly into exhibiting about 14 years ago, and believe me, I have made every mistake imaginable. When you arrive at the show prep area and see the top exhibitors with their truck loads of roses it can be quite intimidating. But just remember that every exhibitor had to start from square one in the beginning.

To help alleviate your fears, and to help you avoid the many mistakes that will be inevitable, here are some of the trade secrets of the best exhibitors.

If you followed our advice and lightly pruned your roses in [late September], your roses should be getting ready to bloom for the fall rose shows. Here are some basics for successfully exhibiting your roses.

Read the Show Schedule – It's very important to get an advance copy of the show schedule and read it thoroughly before you go. It helps to highlight the classes you will be entering with a colored marker.

Prepare Your Grooming Kit – You will need the following tools: cotton swabs, Q-tips, ballpoint pen, entry tags, paper towels, tweezers, small sable brush, cuticle scissors, regular scissors, rose cutters, stem stripper, your name & address labels or a rubber stamp. Put all these things together into a little tool kit and keep them ready for every show.

Cut Your Best Blooms – The day before the show, cut your best blooms at 1/2 to 3/4 open. Cut them early in the morning and recut the stem under water. If the weather is hot, you may need to refrigerate the blooms overnight at 38 degrees, or in a cool, dark place, with the stems in cartons of water and floral preservative. The idea is to bring your cleanest, freshest blooms to the show. Do not remove any of the leaves because you can be penalized for missing foliage above the lip of the vase. Cut the longest stems possible, you can always shorten them before entering them in the show.

Arrive Early to the Show – You should arrive early at the show site, around 7:00 am. This way you will have plenty of time to prepare your roses and you won't feel so rushed. Also, if you arrive late, there may be no space left to prepare your roses and the vases may all be taken. Bring a chair and portable table. Most shows [including Mesa] require that you use the vases they furnish so that the vases look the same and do not distract the judges.

Groom Your Roses – Clean the foliage with a damp cloth, primp the bloom and remove unwanted growth. It's alright to remove damaged petals and trim foliage, but you will be disqualified if you add anything. Never apply oil or [other foreign substance] to the leaves.

Fill Out the Entry Tags – You must use the official ARS entry tags which each show will furnish. If possible, get a few tags ahead of time. Fill in your name and address, the name of each rose variety, and mark which class you are entering. Attach the tags to each vase with a rubber band.

Now, take your roses to the entry table, and – GOOD LUCK!

Reprinted from the October 1998 issue of Rose Ecstasy, bulletin of the Santa Clarita Valley Rose Society, Kitty Belendez, Editor